

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 MCT-01 HA-05 EB-08
COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AGRE-00 AID-05 /097 W
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O R 061613Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6232
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PGOV, NU, VE
SUBJECT: SOMOZA'S PRESS CONFERENCE: APRIL 4

REF: MANAGUA 1590

SUMMARY: HIGHLIGHT OF SOMOZA'S PRESS CONFERENCE WERE HIS REMARKS LAUDING PRESIDENT CARTER'S ASSERTION OF NONINTERVENTIONISM (REFTEL) AND ACCUSATION AGAINST PRESIDENT PEREZ OF INTERVENTIONISM. HOWVER, HE ALSO TOUCHED ON SEVERAL DOMESTIC ISSUES RELATED TO RESTORING POLITICAL CALM IN NICARAGUA. THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT NEW INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED WHICH THE OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA EMPHASIZED, BUT HE DID RESPOND ACCOMMODATINGLY TO SOME OPPOSITION DEMANDS. END SUMMARY.

1. SOMOZA CONDUCTED A TWO AND ONE-THIRD HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL

4 ATTENDED BY BOTH SUPPORTIVE AND OPPOSITIONIST LOCAL PRESS
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AS WELL AS SOME FOREIGN JOURNALISTS. THE QUESTIONS RANGED FROM THE TRIVIAL TO THE PROFOUND WITH SEVERAL TURNING INTO ANTI-REGIME DIATRIBES. SEVERAL LOCAL COMMENTATORS HAVE COMMENTED THAT SOMOZA DEMONSTRATED HE WAS IN FULL CONTROL OF THE SITUATION AS HE SHIFTED FROM SCORN TO REFLECTION TO HUMOR IN RESPONSE TO THE BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS.

2. VENEZUELA. SOMOZA IN EFFECT THREW DOWN THE GUANTLET TO VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ FOR WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS EVIDENCE FROM THE STATEMENTS OF PRESIDENT CARTER THAT PEREZ HAD BEEN PLOTTING INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA BEHIND HIS BACK. SOMOZA SAID: "IN THE FIRST PLACE I THINK IT

IS TIME THAT WE OPEN TO PUBLIC AND POLITICAL DISCUSSION THE INTENTIONS OF INTERVENTION OF SOME OFFICIALS OF THE GOV. IT HAS BEEN EVIDENT TO MY GOVERNMENT THE DESIRE OF THE GOV TO INTERVENE IN NICARAGUA. LONG BEFORE THE FIRST OF JANUARY OF THIS YEAR THEY TRIED TO INTERVENE TO CANCEL THE ARRIVAL OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE VENEZUELAN ARMY FOR THE CONFERENCE OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF OF AMERICA, ARGUING THAT THEY WANTED US TO POSTPONE IT WHEN WE ALREADY HAD 25 COUNTRIES CONFIRMED. LATER, WE KNEW OF THE DESTRUCTIVE CAMPAIGN WHICH THEY MADE IN CARACAS AGAINST THE GOV AND MY FAMILY, RAISING PASSIONS AGAINST THIS COUNTRY. LATER, THE CONSTANT VISITS OF TERRORISTS TO THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY AND THEIR CONSEQUENT ASYLUM. BEFORE WE HAD AN INDICATION, BUT NOW WE KNOW THERE WAS AN OPEN INTENTION OF WANTING TO OVERTHROW THIS REGIME WITH THE DECLARATION WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER MADE." SOMOZA CONTINUED SAYING THAT THIS IS CONDEMNABLE BECAUSE NONINTERVENTION IS THE BIBLE IN LATIN AMERICA. HE TOLD NICARAGUANS TO STOP THINKING THAT THE GOV WOULD BE OVERTHROWN WITH OUTSIDE HEMISPHERIC HELP. HE SAID "IF THE U.S., WHICH IS THE MOST POWERFUL, HAS SAID THAT IT WON'T INTERVENE IN NICARAGUA, IT IS MUCH MORE UNLIKELY OTHERS WILL INTERVENE AND WE WON'T PERMIT IT. ASKED WHETHER NICARAGUA WOULD NOW BE LEFT ALONE TO CHOOSE ITS OWN DESTINY, SOMOZA SAID "NO, BECAUSE NOBODY LEAVES ANYONE ALONE;

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WE ALL HAVE AN INTERDEPENDENT LIFE THESE DAYS...BUT WHOEVER INTERFERES IN AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY HAS THE BAD FAITH OF OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO..."

3. A JOURNALIST SAID JORGE OLAVARRIA (VENEZUELAN JOURNALIST RECENTLY GIVEN ASYLUM IN NICARAGUA) HAD SAID HE KNEW THAT PEREZ HAD FINANCED THE FSLN. SOMOZA REPLIED HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE PROOF BECAUSE THEN HE COULD ACCUSE THE GOV IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. SOMOZA LATER SAID "NOW IT IS KNOWN THAT THERE IS A CHIEF OF STATE TYRING TO OVERTHROW THIS GOVERNMENT." HE CALLED ON THE PRESS TO DENOUNCED THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYING FOR OVERTHROW ACTIVITIES. WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT A BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA MIGHT OCCUR, SOMOZA REPLIED "ON OUR PART, NO, BUT PERHAPS THEY WOULD PROVOKE IT." SOMOZA ALSO SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT VENEZUELA'S PARTICIPATION IN FINANCING SOME GOV DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WOULD BE AFFECTED AS THEY WERE BASED ON INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AS LONG AS NICARAGUA WAS FULFILLING ITS EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENTS. ASKED WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER'S POSITION HAD GIVEN PRESIDENT SOMOZA MORE CONFIDENCE IN THESE DAYS OF CRISIS, SOMOZA REPLIED "YES".

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6233

INFO /AMEMBASSY CARACAS 261

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4. WITH REGARD TO AN IAHRC VISIT, SOMOZA SAID "THE IAHRC IS EMINENTLY POLITICAL. IF TWO-THIRDS OF THE OAS DECIDE THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD VISIT A COUNTRY, THEN THE COUNTRY HAS TO ACCEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STATUTES. THE COMMISSION NEEDS THE CONSENT OF THE COUNTRY IT WISHES TO VISIT. IT WOULD HAVE CONSENT IN OURS. IF, SAY IT WANTS TO VISIT NICARAGUA, WE WILL TELL IT WHEN IT CAN COME, ON WHAT DATE, ETC.,

BUT, I REPEAT, IT NEEDS THE CONSENT OF THE COUNTRY. WE THINK THAT THEY WANT TO USE THE COMMISSION AS A POLITICAL TOOL AT THE PRESENT TIME.

5. REGARDING INITIATIVES TOWARD DEMOCRATIZATION IN NICARAGUA, SOMOZA SAID "THERE IS A NEED TO TAKE FROM THE RICH TO GIVE TO THE POOR, SO THAT THEY MAY IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION. THUS WE HAVE GONE TO THE DIALOGUE. WE ARE NOW DIALOGUING. WE ARE NOW TALKINGABOUT THINGS

THAT USED TO BE SACRED; THEY WERE THINGS WHICH PEOPLE NEVER DARED TO TALK ABOUT: THE ARMY, THE CONSTITUTION, THE JUDICIARY, THE LEGISLATURE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE SOCIAL ASPECT. WE ARE NOW IN AN EFFERVESCENCE BECAUSE THE COUNTRY

NEEDS IT; AND WHO HAS LED THIS COUNTRY TO THIS? THE LIBERAL PARTY
WITH ITS HEALTHY LEADERSHIP HAS IMPROVED THE LIVES OF ALL NICARAGUANS.

WE ARE IN THAT DIALOGUE."

6. SOMOZA EXPLAINED HIS ELECTORAL REFORM INITIATIVE AS HURRIED TO MEET CONSTITUTIONAL NORMS AND "BE ABLE TO MAKE RESPONSIVE THE SYSTEM OF POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION OF THE COUNTRY... BUT I AM GOING AHEAD... WHETHER THE OPPOSITION PARTICIPATES OR NOT... BUT WE ARE IN A MOMENT OF REFORM OF THE COUNTRY, IN PART OR TOTALLY IN CERTAIN SECTORS." ON THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY LAW, SOMOZA SAID IT WOULD BE ENDED BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. (ONE NEWSPAPER INTERPRETED SOMOZA'S REMARK AS A PROMISE TO SUSPEND APPLICATION OF THE LAW DURING THIS YEAR.) HE SAID HE COULD ACCEPT AN AMNESTY SO THAT PEACE WOULD RETURN WHEN AND IF THE POLITICAL PARTIES WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT IT. OTHER POINTS WHICH HAVE BEEN ADVANCED BY THE OPPOSITION AND WHICH SOMOZA SAID HE COULD ACCEPT AS ISSUES FOR A DIALOGUE, WERE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE JUDICIAL CAREER, CREATION OF AN ATTORNEY GENERAL, ENDING LIFETIME SENATE MEMBERSHIP FOR EX-PRESIDENTS (THOSE WHO FOLLOW HIM), AND PROHIBITION OF HIGH GUARDIA POSITIONS FOR RELATIVES OF THE PRESIDENT.

7. OTHER LESS IMPORTANT POINTS INCLUDED IN THE CONFERENCE WERE:
SOMOZA WISHED GOOD LUCK TO A NEW POLITICAL OPPOSITION MOVEMENT WHICH HAS JUST BEEN LAUNCHED; HE REASSERTED THE RIGHT OF THE POLICE TO ENTER PRIVATE HOMES WITHOUT WARRANT IF IT WERE IN HOT PURSUIT OF A CRIMINAL; HE ACKNOWLEDGED HAVING SENT A TRUTH SQUAD TO THE U.S. TO CORRECT THE MANY LIES REGARDING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN NICARAGUA; HE SAID THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION IS STUCK AT THE POINT OF NOT BEING ABLE TO GO FURTHER WITH THE TRUTH FROM PENA (THE HEAD OF THE ASSASSINATION TEAM) OR RAMOS (THE U.S. CITIZEN NAMED BY PENA AS THE AUTHOR

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OF THE CRIME). SOMOZA ALSO MADE SEVERAL COMMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ECONOMY IS HEALTHY BECAUSE IT IS BASED ON AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS AND THAT THE CURRENT FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WERE DUE TO THE 1972 EARTH-QUAKE AND THE ATTITUDES OF THE RICH. HE ALSO REFERRED TO VARIOUS ON-GOING OR FUTURE PROGRAMS OF THE GON SUCH AS ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR.

8. IN RESPONSE TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE, OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER, LA PRESNSA, ON APRIL 5, PREDICTABLY DESCRIBED THE EVENT UNDER THE HEADLINE "IMPOSSIBLE TO DIALOGUE WITH SOMOZA". AN ACCOMPANYING EDITORIAL WAS HEADED "SOMOZA ALWAYS IS...SOMOZA". THE EDITORIAL ARGUED THAT EVEN THOUGH SOMOZA TRIED TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF OPENNESS AND A LEADER CAPABLE OF EVOLUTION, THAT NEVERTHELESS HE SHOWED THAT HE CONTINUES TO BE THE SAME AS EVER. THE EDITORIAL CITED SOMOZA'S COMMENTS REGARDING HOT PURSUIT. OTHER LESS IMPORTANT POLITICAL COMMENTATORS, HOWEVER, SUGGESTED THAT SOMOZA HAS NOW PUT THE BALL IN THE COURT OF THE OPPOSITION AND IT WAS THEIR TURN TO REACT ON THE

QUESTION OF INITIATING A DIALOGUE.

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